



Fatal Words?

By Marquis Childs

Paris.

For more than a decade the youth who so courageously led the revolt in Hungary had been incessantly indoctrinated with the Marxist-Leninist dogma at the root of the Soviet system. They got it from primary school on up through the university.

Yet they apparently were untouched by it, responding to the same deeply human Western impulses which this indoctrination was meant to eradicate.

This is an answer, and a vastly encouraging one, to those who have been saying in recent years that the Communist system would produce Communist robots divorced entirely from all the values of the West.

But some of the best-informed observers on the East-West relationship have been considering the effects of this shattering blow on the Communist leaders within the walled enclosure which is Soviet Russia. Together with what has happened in Poland, Hungary destroys the fiction on which these men based their whole society.

The indoctrination does not necessarily work, and since the indoctrination is the essence of the new society and the great achievements claimed for it, then that society itself is jeopardized and driven back upon itself.

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What must this mean to the men in the Kremlin who cannot really deceive themselves with the propaganda about "fascism" and the "white terror"?

This question is being asked with a certain trepidation in Western Europe by those who understand the paranoid need of the Kremlin bosses for security, for constant reassurance. When Nikita S. Khrushchev snarls angrily at Western diplomats at a reception, he is displaying with less restraint than the others the uncertainties of the moment.

Into what reckless adventures this new gnawing uncertainty may carry the quarreling men of the Kremlin is the fear of thoughtful observers.

These same observers, who try to take as dispassionate a view as possible of the Hungarian horror, believe President Eisenhower acted in the hour of crisis with wise restraint, seeking to assure the world that the U. S. was not exploiting or would not exploit in any way the revolution. Any less restraint might have provoked a general war.

The American dilemma as the Hungarian uprising began was an impossible one. To exercise caution and restraint was to bring down the kind of bitter criticism now widespread in Europe.

A great deal of the criticism was aimed at Radio Free Europe, an American broadcasting station in Munich, which is partly supported by contributions and partly by government funds.

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Both reporters and refugees out of Hungary have charged that RFE broadcasts encouraged thousands of young Hungarians to go on fighting in the belief that American support in the form of arms, planes and troops was coming to their relief.

Some have gone so far as to say that RFE, particularly by broadcasting the statement of Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. at the UN that the U. S. would never let Hungary down, caused the senseless slaughter of thousands of youths.

RFE denied that its broadcasts were in any sense inflammatory. The Lodge statement, it has been explained, was put on the air in its complete and original version immediately as the speech was being made and repeated the following morning. According to RFE, it was not used again.

The West German Socialist Party in its newspaper charged RFE with provocative broadcasts and the American government by saying:

"In not one single broadcast has RFE tried to incite the Hungarian people to armed revolt, nor have any promises been made in regard to weapons from the West. During and before the dramatic events in Hungary RFE has acted in exactly the same manner as any other Western radio station in Europe."

The Socialist charges are now being investigated by the Bonn government and RFE has put its entire Hungarian program since Oct. 23 into the hands of German officials.

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There already has been talk of a Congressional investigation in Washington. If such an investigation could be done carefully and objectively without a blaze of publicity, it might serve a useful purpose, for, as Hungary has shown, it is an extremely dubious business for those who sit in safety to play with words capable of stirring courageous and long-suffering men and women to action when action is hopeless.

In the anger and frustration Hungary has stirred, it is natural to seek a scapegoat; and that is perhaps RFE's role at present. But any critical and sober investigation should go back to the origins of the "Liberation" policy. That word was used by State Secretary Dulles in a speech early in the political campaign of 1952.

And while the word itself was quickly dropped because the public reaction was bad, the implied promise of liberation has been in many a speech and especially where the appeal was considered effective for minority groups.